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TENNCARE FUNDS EXPANSION OF CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

AT RISK YOUTH IN EAST TENN TO BENEFIT FROM EXPANSION

NASHVILLE, TENN—TennCare is funding an additional \$1 million to expand the State's Centers of Excellence for Children in State Custody to help youth in state custody or at-risk for entering state custody, officials announced today.

The additional seed money from TennCare is expected to expand programs in the East Tennessee region. Currently, only ETSU in upper east Tennessee operates a Centers of Excellence (COE) that targets troubled youth in state custody in that region.

"With TennCare on solid footing, we're proud to be able to dedicate energy and resources to helping kids on our program with serious behavioral and medical issues," said TennCare Director, Dr. J.D. Hickey. "The Centers of Excellence are an invaluable resource for these kids and the extra attention can mean a better life for a troubled child."

The Centers of Excellence are under the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination. The COEs typically work with children who have complex behavioral and medical problems and provide direct services to these children including psychiatric and psychological evaluations and medication management. Through treatment plan review and development, case consultation and coordination with the Department of Children's Services and TennCare providers, and routine on-site case review, the COEs provide extra attention to seriously troubled youth in the state's care. For children with complicated medical problems, the COEs coordinate referrals and services to medical sub-specialties and hospital services to meet the child's needs.

"The Centers of Excellence are an integral part of the care system for children in state custody," said Dr. Tom Catron, Director for the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination. "These expansion funds show our commitment to delivering the highest quality of care in our state to troubled youth."

There are approximately 10,000 children in state custody at any given time. Children in state custody receive healthcare coverage from TennCare.

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The State's Centers of Excellence for Children in State Custody have been recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as one of the top four innovative programs serving children in the United States. The State's Centers of Excellence currently reside at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, University of Tennessee-Memphis Boling Center and East Tennessee State University Medical Center for children in state custody or at-risk for entering state custody.

TennCare is Tennessee's expanded Medicaid program serving 1.2 million Tennesseans including 640,000 children.

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Editor's note: Below are additional interview opportunities regarding the effects of the Centers for Excellence expansion.

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